

Now, there's a highway bill making its way through Congress, and I support a good highway bill. I presented a good highway bill that would have significant increase in our infrastructure. But I hope that as Congress continues to consider this and determine how much money should be put in it, they will remember some other things. We've got to build a lot of highways—or bridges, if you will—to the 21st century. We have to have a road that will make Social Security strong in the 21st century. We have to have a road that will make our children's environment better in the 21st century. We have to have a road that will guarantee universal high-quality, high-standards education in the 21st century.

I think we have to have a road that will guarantee that people will not have to choose between being good parents and good children and that we will act on the overwhelming weight of the evidence about the importance of the earliest years in the child's life.

Now, there are choices to be made, and it is wrong to pretend that there are no choices here. We now have the opportunity, because of the good fortune that we enjoy as a people, because of the solvency of the budget, to take a major step forward in child care, to build that part of our national infrastructure. You look around at all these children today and at their parents beaming about them; I don't really believe that any part of our infrastructure is more important than they are.

Thank you very much.

Tax Cuts

Q. Mr. President, do you propose tax cuts for mothers who want to stay home?

The President. I'm glad you didn't stay home today, Sam [Sam Donaldson, ABC News]. [Laughter]

Q. What do you think of the idea of tax cuts for a stay-at-home mom?

The President. Well, we need to get into a negotiation. We need to get started talking seriously about what we're going to do.

Q. Would you be open to it?

The President. I'll be happy to talk to them, but we've got to—are we going to make a serious effort here? We need to have a discussion about it.

Q. So you are willing to negotiate, then?

The President. I'm willing to negotiate with anybody who wants to help people raise their children better so that people can succeed at home and at work. It's not an either-or deal. That's why we had the \$500 tax credit last time, children's tax credit, because we wanted to help all parents. We're not against helping all parents. But the question is, most parents are in the work force and we have to do something serious about it. We have to decide, are we going to do it, or not?

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Treasury Department Working Group on Child Care member Randall L. Tobias, president, chairman, and chief executive officer, Eli Lilly and Co. He also referred to the Treasury working group's report, "Investing in Child Care," and the Department of Labor report "Meeting the Needs of Today's Workforce: Child Care Best Practices." The exchange portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on Senate Action on Education Legislation

April 23, 1998

I am disappointed that Republicans in the United States Senate have passed up a major opportunity to improve public education in this country.

Instead of investing in modern schools for the 21st century, the Senate chose to provide tax incentives skewed to high-income taxpayers. Instead of helping make classes smaller and improving student learning, the Senate chose to eliminate accountability by prohibiting voluntary national tests. Instead of giving kids new learning opportunities after school to keep them out of trouble, the Senate chose to undermine the critical safe and drug-free schools initiative. Instead of working to strengthen public education, the Coverdell bill returns us to the days when Republicans waged a campaign to eliminate the Department of Education.

As I have said before, if this bill reaches my desk, I will veto it, because it weakens our commitment to making America's schools the best they can be in the 21st century.

Statement on Protecting the Northern Right Whale

April 23, 1998

Today I instructed the United States representatives to the International Maritime Organization to seek strong measures to protect the northern right whale, one of the world's most endangered marine mammals.

Like many other species of whale, the northern right whale was once hunted nearly to extinction. The 300 or so that survive spend much of the year in waters off of Cape Cod and off the Georgia and Florida coasts. Biologists believe the greatest human threat they face today is collisions with large ships. We must address this threat so these magnificent creatures can flourish once again.

Under our proposal, which the IMO will address when it meets in July, commercial ships entering the whales' calving and feeding grounds will be required to report by radio to the U.S. Coast Guard, which will relay back the latest information on the whales' locations and advice on avoiding collisions. We believe this reporting system is essential if we are to ensure the survival of these majestic creatures.

Joint Statement on United States-Turkmenistan Relations

April 23, 1998

During their April 23, 1998 meeting in Washington, Presidents Clinton and Niyazov agreed to expand cooperation between the United States and the Republic of Turkmenistan to promote its development as a market democracy. The United States strongly supports Turkmenistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and respects its neutrality. Through governmental and private sector partnerships, the United States and Turkmenistan aim to strengthen political, economic, security, commercial and agricultural ties for the benefit of both countries.

Presidents Clinton and Niyazov agreed on the importance of rapid development of Caspian energy resources and efficient export routes to world markets to promote regional development. U.S. companies are deeply en-

gaged in these activities and this engagement is growing. The two Presidents focused particular attention on strengthening east-west routes in the Eurasian transport corridor. They expressed their support for practical steps to develop a trans-Caspian pipeline as part of a multiple pipeline network. President Niyazov welcomed the support of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency to assess the feasibility of a trans-Caspian pipeline. In this context, the Presidents favor early resolution of the Caspian delimitation dispute. They welcomed the recent positive developments in the Afghanistan peace process, which could create new commercial opportunities and advance prospects for construction of a trans-Afghan pipeline.

The United States and Turkmenistan seek to expand economic and commercial relations, including greater trade and investment. The two nations will work toward completing a Bilateral Investment Treaty. Both Presidents welcomed the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between USAID and the Government of Turkmenistan on technical and professional assistance to the Turkmen energy sector, and of a Cooperation Agreement between the U.S. Export Import Bank and the Government of Turkmenistan. Extensive potential exists to deepen agricultural cooperation, building on the already active role of U.S. firms in Turkmenistan. The United States and Turkmenistan agreed to launch a bilateral dialogue on energy policy and commercial issues.

Turkmenistan has made significant progress toward economic stabilization. To sustain this progress, President Clinton encouraged deeper structural reforms, including privatization, in close cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Such steps will facilitate Turkmenistan's integration into the global economy. The United States supports Turkmenistan's accession to the World Trade Organization on commercial terms generally applied to newly acceding countries.

Democratization, economic reform and observance of human rights are essential to Turkmenistan's future. Rapid, concrete steps toward reform in these areas will demonstrate Turkmenistan's intent to abide by